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THE

MISTRESS OF THE MANSE

BY

J. G. HOLLAND

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WOR 20 JUN 84

PRELUDE.

THE MISTRESS OF THE MANSE.

Mary F. Williams.

Dup. to
Be Kept

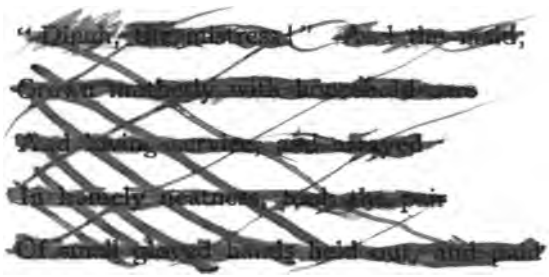
THE MISTRESS OF THE MANSE.

THE MISTRESS OF THE MANSE.

I.

A FLUTTERING bevy left the gate
With hurried steps, and sped away;
And then a coach with drooping freight,
Wrapped in its film of dusty gray,
Stopped; and the pastor and his mate

Stepped forth, and passed the waiting door,
And closed it on the gazing street.
"Oh Philip!" She could say no more.
"Oh Mildred! You're at home, my sweet,—
The old life closed: the new before!"



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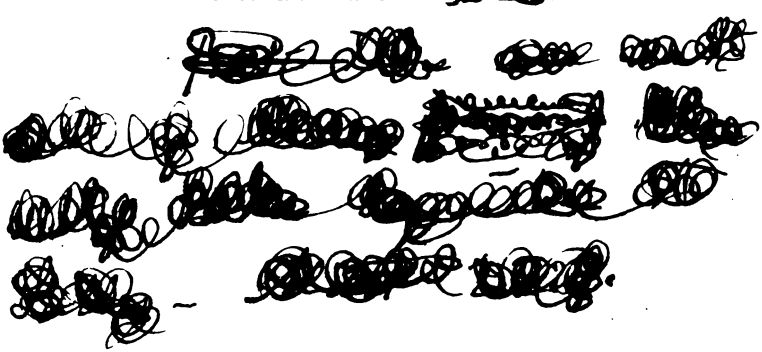
And when she brought her forth at last,
To him who grudged the long delay,
He found the soil of travel cast,
And Mildred fresh and fair [redacted].



II.

"This is our little Manse," he said.
"Now look with both your curious eyes
Around, above and overhead,
And seeing all things, realize
That they are ours, and we are wed!

"Walk through these freshly garnished rooms—
These halls of oak and tinted pearl—
And mark the cups of clover-blooms,
Cut fresh, to greet the stranger-girl,
By those whose kindliness illumes

"There will you sit in girlish grace,
And catch the sunrise in your hair;
And looking at you, from my place,
I shall behold more sweet and fair
The morning in your smiling face.

"And guests shall come, and guests shall go,
And break with us our daily bread;
And sometime—sometime—do you know?
I hope that—dearest, lift your head;
And let me speak it, soft and low!

"The grass is sweeter than the ground:
Can love be better than its flowers?
Oh sometime—sometime—in the round
Of coming years, this board of ours
I hope may blossom and abound

With shining curls, and laughing eyes,
And pleasant jests and merry words,
And questions full of life's surprise,
And light and music, when the birds
Have left us to our gloomy skies.

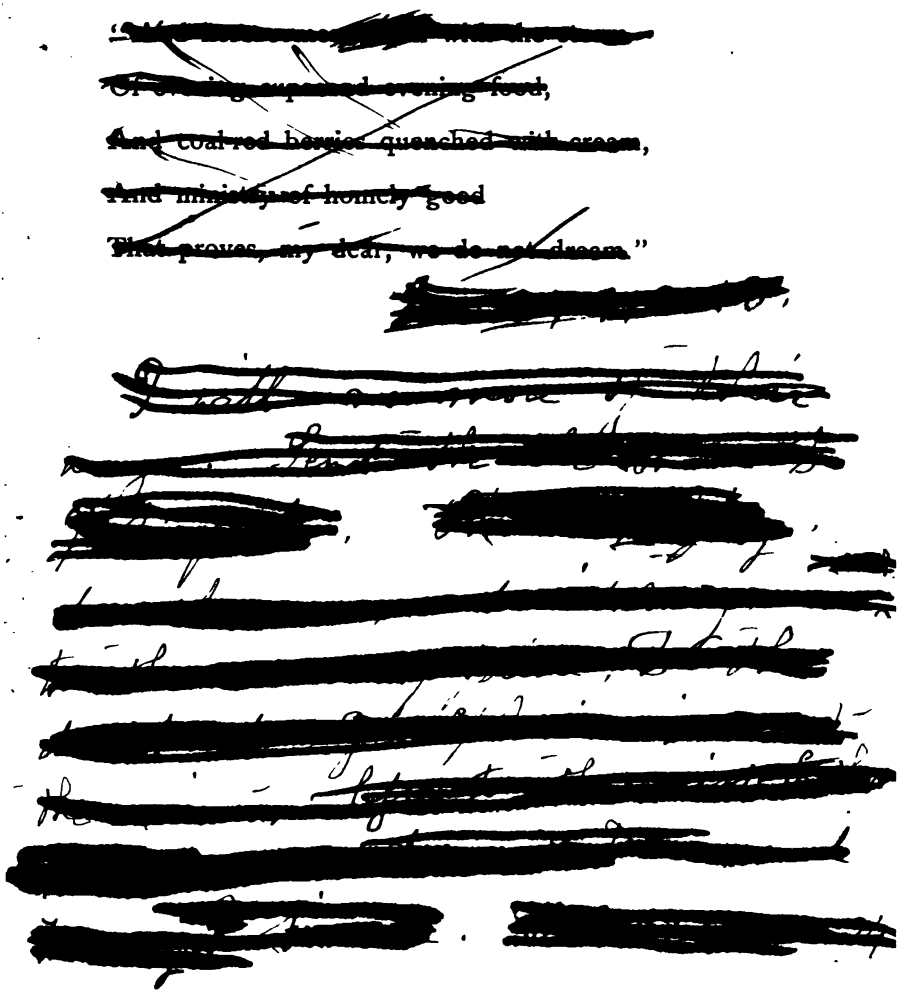
"Now mount with me the old oak stair!
This is your chamber—pink and blue!
They asked the color of your hair,
And draped and fitted all for you,
My fine brunette, with tasteful care.

"The linen is as white as snow;
The flowers are set on every sconce;
And e'en the cushioned pin-heads show
Your formal "welcome," for the nonce,
To the sweet home their hands bestow.

"Declining to the river's marge,
See, from this window, how the turf
Runs with a thousand flowers in charge
To meet the silver feet of surf
That fly from every passing barge!

"Along that reach of liquid light
Flies Commerce with her countless keels;
There the chained Titan in his might
Turns slowly round the groaning wheels
That drag her burdens, day and night.

"And now the red sun flings his kiss
Across its waves from finger-tips
That pause, and grudgingly dismiss
The one he loves to closer lips,
And Moonlight's quiet hour of bliss.



III.

He heard the long-drawn organ-peal
Within his chapel call to prayer;
And, answering with ready zeal,
He breathed o'er Mildred's weary chair
These words, and sealed them with a seal:

"Only an hour: but comfort take;—
This home and I are wholly yours;
And many bosoms fondly ache
To tell you that while life endures,
You shall be cherished for my sake.

"So throw your heart's door open wide,
And take in mine as well as me;
Let no poor creature be denied
The grace of tender courtesy
And kindness from the pastor's bride."

IV.

The moon came up the summer sky:
"Oh happy moon!" the lady said;
"Men love thee for thyself, but I
Am loved because my life is wed
To one whose message, pure and high,

Has spread the world's evangel far,
And thrown such radiance through the dark
That men behold him as a star,
And in his gracious coming mark
How beautiful his footsteps are.

"Oh Moon! dost thou take all thy light
From the great sun so lately gone?
Are there not shapes upon thy white,
That mould and make his sheen thy own,
And charms that soften to the sight

The ardor of his blinding blaze?
Who loves thee that thou art the sun's?
Who does not give thee sweetest praise
Among the troop of shining ones
That sweep along the heavenly ways?

"Yet still within the holy place
The altar sanctifies the gift!
Poor, precious gift, that begs for grace!
Oh towering altar! that doth lift
The gift so high, that, in its face,

It bears no beauty to the thought
Of those who round the altar stand!
Poor, precious gift, that goes for naught
From willing heart and ready hand,
And wins no favor unbesought!

"The stars are whiter for the blue;
The sky is deeper for the stars;
They give and take in commerce true,
And lend their beauty to the cars
Of downy dusk, that all night through

Roll o'er the void on silver wheels;
Yet neither starry sky nor cloud
Is loved the less that it reveals
A beauty all its own, endowed
By all the wealth its beauty steals.

"Am I a dew-drop in a rose,
With no significance apart?
Must I but sparkle in repose
Close to its folded, fragrant heart,
Its peerless beauty to disclose?

"Would I not toil to win his bread,
And give him all I have to give?
Would I not die in his sweet stead,
And die in joy? But I must live;
And, living, I must still be fed

On love that comes in love's own right.
They must not pet, or pamper me—
Those who rejoice beneath his light—
Or pity him, that I can be
So precious in his princely sight."

With swifter wings, through heart and brain,
The little hour unheeded flew;
And when, behind the blazoned stain
Of saintly vestures, red and blue,
The lights on rose and window-pane

Within the chapel slowly died,
And figures muffled by the moon
Went shuffling home on either side—
One seeking her—she said: How soon!
And then the pastor kissed his bride.

V.

The bright night brightened into dawn;
The shadows down the mountain passed;
And tree and shrub and sloping lawn,
With bending, beaded beauty glassed
In myriad suns the sun that shone!

The robin fed her nested young;
The swallows bickered 'neath the eaves;
The hang-bird in her hammock swung,
And, tilting high among the leaves,
Her red mate sang alone, or flung

The dew-drops on her lifted head;
While on the grasses, white and far,
The tents of fairy hosts were spread
That, scared before the morning star,
Had left their reeking camp, and fled.

The pigeon preened his opal breast;
And o'er the meads the bobolink,
With vexed perplexity confessed
His tinkling gutturals in a kink,
Or giggled round his secret nest.

With dizzy wings and dainty craft,
In green and gold, the humming-bird
Dashed here and there, and touched and quaffed
The honey-dew, then flashed and whirred,
And vanished like the feathered shaft

That glitters from a random bow.
The flies were buzzing in the sun,
The bees were busy in the snow
Of lilies, and the spider spun,
And waited for his prey below.

With sail aloft and sail adown,
And motion neither slow nor swift,
With dark-brown hull and shadow brown,
Half-way between two skies adrift,
The barque went dreaming toward the town.

'Twas Sunday in the silent street,
And Sunday in the silent sky.
The peace of God came down to meet
The throng that laid their labor by,
And rested weary hands and feet.

Ah, sweet the scene which caught the glance
Of eyes that with the morning woke,
And, from their window in the manse,
Looked up through sprays of elm and oak
Into the sky's serene expanse,

And off upon the distant wood,
And down into the garden's close,
And over, where his chapel stood
In ivy, reaching to its rose,
Waiting the Sunday multitude!

VI.

A red rose in her raven hair
Whose curls forbade the plait and braid,
The bride slid down the oaken stair,
And mantled like a bashful maid,
As, seated in the waiting chair,

Behind the fragrant urn, she poured
The nectar of the morn's repast;
But fairer lady, fonder lord,
In happier hall ne'er broke their fast
With sweeter bread, at prouder board.

And then they rose with common will,
And sought the parlor, cool and dim.
"Sing, love!" he said. "The birds grow still,
And wait with me to hear your hymn."
She swept a low, preluding trill—

A spray of sound—across the keys
That felt her fingers for the first;
And then, from simplest cadences,
A reverent melody she nursed,
And gave it voice in words like these:

"From full forgetfulness of pain,
From joy to opening joy again,
With bird and flower, and hill and tree,
We lift our eyes and hands to thee,
To greet thee, Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth!

"That thou dost bathe our souls anew
With balm and boon of heavenly dew,
And smilest in our upward eyes
From the far blue of smiling skies,
We bless thee, Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth!

"For human love and love divine,
For love of ours and love of thine,
For heaven on earth and heaven above—
To thee and us twin homes of love—
We thank thee, Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth!

"Oh dove-like wings, so wide unfurled
In brooding calm above the world!
Waft us your holy peace, and raise
The incense of our morning praise
Up to our Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth!"

VII.

Full fleetly sped the morning hours;
Then, wide upon the country round
A tumult of melodious powers
In tumult of melodious sound
Burst forth from all the village towers.

With blow on blow, and tone on tone,
And echoes answering everywhere—
Like bugles from the mountains blown—
Each sought to whelm the burdened air,
And make the silence all its own.

In broad, sonorous, silver swells
The air was billowed like the sea;
And listening ears were listening shells
That caught the Sabbath minstrelsy,
And sang it with the singing bells.

The billows heaved, the billows broke,
The first wild burst went down amain;
The music fell to slower stroke,
And in a rhythmic, bold refrain
The great bells to each other spoke.

Oh bravely bronze gave forth his word,
And sharply silver made reply,
And every tower and turret stirred
With sounding breath and converse high,
Or paused with waiting ear, and heard.

And long they talked, as friend to friend;
Then faltered to their closing toll,
Whose long, monotonous repetend,
From every music-burdened bowl
Poured the last drop, and brought the end!

VIII.

The chapel's chime fell slow and soft,
And throngs slow-marching to its knoll
From village home and distant croft,
With careful feet and reverent soul
Pressed toward the door, but oft

Turned curious and expectant eyes
Upon the Manse that stood apart.
There in her quiet, bridal guise
Fair Mildred sat with shrinking heart;
While Philip, bold and otherwise,

And knowing naught of woman's ways,
Smiled at her fears, and could not guess
How one so armored in his praise,
And strong in native loveliness,
Could dread to meet his people's gaze.

He could not know her fine alarm
When at his manly side she stood,
And, leaning faintly on his arm—
A dainty slip of womanhood—
Walked forth where every girlish charm

Was scanned with prying gaze and glance,
Among the slowly moving crowd
That, greedy of the precious chance,
Read furtively, but half aloud,
The pages of their new romance.

"A child!" And Mildred caught the word.
"A plaything!" And another voice:
"Fine feathers, and a Southern bird!"
And still one more: "A parson's choice!"
And trembling Mildred overheard.

These from the careless or the dull—
Gossips at best; at wisest, dolts;
And though her quickened eâr might cull
From out their whispered thunderbolts
A "lovely!" and a "beautiful!"

And though sweet mother-faces smiled,
And bows were given with friendly grace,
And many a pleasant little child
Sought sympathy within her face,
Her aching heart was not beguiled.

She did not see—she only felt—
As up the staring aisle she walked—
The critic glances, coldly dealt,
By those who looked, and bent, and talked;
And, even, when at last she knelt

Alone within the pastor's pew,
And prayed for self-forgetfulness
With deep humility, she knew
She gave her figure and her dress
To careful eyes with closer view.

IX.

At length she raised her head, and tossed
A burden from her heart and brain.
She would have love at any cost
Of weary toil and patient pain,
And rightful ease and pleasure lost!

They could not love her for his sake;
They would not, and her heart forgave.
Why should a woman stoop to take
The poor endowment of a slave,
And like a menial choose to make

Her master's mantle half her own?
They loved her least who loved him most:
They envied her her little throne!
He who was cherished by a host
Was hers by gift, and hers alone,

And she would prove her woman's right
To hold the throne to which the king
Had called her, clothing her with white;
And never would she show her ring
To win a loving proselyte!

These were the thoughts and this the strife
That through her kindling spirit swept,
And wrought her purposes of life;
And powers that waked and powers that slept
Within the sweet and girlish wife,

Sprang into energy intense,
At touch of an inspiring chrism
That fell on her, she knew not whence,
And lifted her to heroism
Which wrapped her wholly, soul and sense.

X.

Meanwhile, through all the vaulted space
The organ sent its angels out;
And up and down the holy place
They fanned the cheeks of care and doubt,
And touched each worn and weary face

With beauty as their wings went by:
Then sailed afar with peaceful sweep,
And, calling heavenward every eye,
Evanished into silence deep—
The earth forgotten in the sky!

Then by the sunlight warmly kissed,
Far up, in rainbow glory set,
Rayed round with gold and amethyst,
She saw upon the great rosette
The Saviour's visage, pale and trist.

"Oh Crown of Thorns!" she softly breathed;
"Oh precious crown of love divine!
Oh brow with trickling life enwreathed!
Oh piercing thorns and crimson sign!
I hold you mine in love bequeathed.

"But not for sake of these or thee!
I must win love as thou hast won.
The thorns are mine, and all must see,
In sacrifice, and service done,
The loving Lord they love in me."

XI.

Then, through a large and golden hour
She listened to the golden speech
Of one who held the priceless dower
Of love and eloquence, that reach
And move the hearts of men with power.

Ah poor the music of the choir
That voiced the Psalter after him!
And strong the prayer that, touched with fire,
Flamed upward, past the seraphim,
And wrapped the throne of his desire!

She watched and heard as in a dream,
When, in the old, familiar ground
Of sacred truth, he found his theme,
And led it forth, until it wound
Through meadows broad—a swollen stream

That flashed and eddied in the light,
And fed the grasses at its edge,
Or thundered in its onward might
O'er interposing weir and ledge,
And left them hidden in the white;

While on it pressed, and, to the eye,
Grew broader, till its breadth became
A solemn river, sweeping by,
That, quick with ships and red with flame,
Reached far away and kissed the sky!

Strong men were moved as trees are bowed
Before a swift and sounding wind;
And sighs were long and sobs were loud,
Of those who loved and those who sinned,
Among the deeply listening crowd.

XII.

And Mildred, in the whelming tide
Of thought and feeling, quite forgot
That he who thus had magnified
His office, held a common lot
With her, and owned her as his bride.

But when, at length, the thought returned
That she was his in plighted truth,
And she with humbled soul discerned
That, though her youth was given to youth,
And love by love was fairly earned,

She could not match him wing-and-wing
Through all his broad and lofty range,
And feared what passing years might bring—
No change for good, but only change
That would degrade her to a thing

Of homely use and household care,
And love by duty basely kept—
She bowed her head upon the bare
Cold rail that hid her face, and wept,
And poured her passion in a prayer.

XIII.

"Oh Father, Father!" thus she prayed:
"Thou know'st the priceless boon I seek!
Before my life, abashed, dismayed,
I stand, with hopeless hands and weak,
Of him and of myself afraid!

"Teach me and lead me where to find,
Beyond the touch of hand and lip,
That vital charm of heart and mind
Which, in a true companionship,
My feebler life to his shall bind!

"His ladder leans upon the sun:
I cannot climb it: give me wings!
Grant that my deeds, divinely done,
May be appraised divinest things,
Though they be little every one.

"His stride is strong; his steps are high:
May not my deeds be little stairs
That, counted swift, shall keep me nigh,
Till at the summit, unawares,
We stand with equal foot and eye?

"If further down toward Nature's heart
His root is struck, commanding springs
In whose deep life I have no part,
Send me, on recompensing wings,
The rain that gathers where thou art!

"Oh give me vision to divine
What he with delving hand explores!
Feed me with flame that shall refine
To finest gold the rugged ores
His strong hands gather from the mine!

"O dearest Father! May no sloth,
Or weakness of my weaker soul,
Delay him in his kingly growth,
Or hold him meanly from the goal
That shines with guerdon for us both!"

XIV.

Then all arose as if a spell
Had been dissolved for their release,
The while the benediction fell
Which breathed the gentle Master's peace
On all the souls that loved him well.

And Philip, coming from his place,
Like Moses from the mountain pyre,
Bore on his brow the shining grace
Of one who, in the cloud and fire,
Had met his Maker, face to face.

And men and women, young and old,
Pressed up to meet him as he came,
And children, by their love made bold,
Grasped both his hands and spoke his name,
And in their simple language told

Their joy to see his face once more;
While half in pleasure, half in pain,
His bride stood waiting at her door
The passage of the friendly train
That slowly swept the crowded floor.

Half-bows were tendered and returned;
And welcomes fell from lips and eyes;
But in her heart she meekly spurned
The love that came in love's disguise
Of sympathy—the love unearned.

XV.

Then out beneath the noon-day sun
Of the old Temple, cool and dim,
She walked beside her chosen one,
And lost her loneliness in him;
But hardly was her walk begun

When, straight before her in the street,
With tender shock her eye descried
A little child, with naked feet
And scanty dress, that, hollow-eyed,
Looked up and begged for bread to eat.

Nor pride of place nor dainty spleen
Felt with her heart the sickening shock.
She took the hand so soiled and lean;
And silken robe and ragged frock
Moved side by side across the green.

She looked for love, and, low and wild,
She found it—looking, too, for love!
So in each other's eyes they smiled,
As, dark brown hand in snowy glove,
The bride led home the hungry child.

And men and women in amaze
Paused in their homeward steps to see
The bride retreating from their gaze,
Clasped hand in hand with misery;
Then brushed their eyes, and went their ways.

XVI.

When the long parley found a close,
And, clean and kempt, the little oaf—
Disburdened of her wants and woes,
And burdened with her wheaten loaf—
Went forth to minister to those

Who sent her on her bitter quest,
The bride stood smiling at her door,
And in her happiness confessed
That she had found a friend; nay, more—
Had entertained a heavenly guest.

And as she watched her down the street,
With brow grown bright with sunny thought,
And heart o'erfilled with something sweet,
She knew the vagrant child had brought
The blessing of the Paraclete.

She turned from out the blazing noon,
And sought her chamber's quiet shade,
Like one who had received a boon
She might not show, but which essayed
Expression in a happy croon.

And then, outleaping from the mesh
Of Memory's net, like bird or bee,
There thrilled her spirit and her flesh
This old half-song, half-rhapsody,
That sang, or said itself, afresh :

"Poor little wafer of silver!
More precious to me than its cost!
It was worn of both image and legend,
But priceless because it was lost.
My chamber I carefully swept;
I hunted, and wondered, and wept;
And I found it at last with a cry:
"Oh dear little jewel!" said I;
And I washed it with tears all the day;
Then I kissed it, and put it away.

"Poor little lamb of the sheepfold!
Unlovely and feeble it grew;
But it wandered away to the mountains,
And was fairer the further it flew.
I followed with hurrying feet
At the call of its pitiful bleat,

And precious, with wonderful charms,
I caught it at last in my arms,
And bore it far back to its keep,
And kissed it and put it to sleep.

"Poor little vagrant from Heaven!
It wandered away from the fold,
And its weakness and danger endowed it
With value more precious than gold.
Oh happy the day when it came,
And my heart learned its beautiful name!
Oh happy the hour when I fed
This waif of the angels with bread!
And the lamb that the Shepherd had missed
Was sheltered and nourished and kissed!"

XVII.

To Philip, Mildred was a child,
Or a fair angel, to be kept
From all things earthly undefiled,—
One who upon his bosom slept,
And only waked to be beguiled

From loneliness and homely care
By love's unfailing ministry.
No toil of his was she to share,
No burden hers, that should not be
Left for his stronger hands to bear.

His love enwrapped her as a robe,
Which seemed, by its supernal charm,
To shield from every poisoned probe
Of earthly pain and earthly harm
This one choice creature of the globe.

The love he bore her lifted him
Into a bright, sweet atmosphere
That filled with beauty to the brim
The world beneath him, far and near,
And stained the clouds that draped its rim.

Toil was not toil, except in name;
Care was not care, but only means
To feed with holy oil the flame
That warmed her soul, and lit the scenes
Through which her figure went and came.

Her smile of welcome was his meed;
Her presence was his great reward;
He questioned sadly if, indeed,
He loved more loyally his Lord,
Or if his Lord felt greater need.

And Mildred, vexed, misunderstood,
Knew all his love, but might not tell
How in his thought, so large and good,
And in his heart, there did not dwell
The measure of her womanhood.

She knew the girlish charm would fade;
She knew the rapture would abate;
That years would follow when the maid,
Merged in the matron, and sedate
With change, and sitting in the shade

Of a great nature, would become
As poor and pitiful a thing
As an old idol, and as dumb,—
A clog upon an upward wing,—
A value stricken from the sum

Which a true woman's hand would raise
To mighty numbers, and endow
With kingly power and crowning praise.
She must be mate of his; but how?
And, dreaming of a thousand ways

Her hands would work, her feet would tread,
She thought to match him as a man!
His books should be her daily bread;
She would run swiftly where he ran,
And follow closely where he led.

XVIII.

Since time began, the perfect day
Has robbed the morrow of its wealth,
And squandered, in its lavish sway,
The balm and beauty of the stealth,
And left its golden throne in gray.

So when the Sunday light declined,
A cold wind sprang and shut the flowers:
Then vagrant voices, undefined,
Grew louder through the evening hours,
Till the old chimney howled and whined

As if it were a frightened beast,
That witnessed from its dizzy post
The loathsome forms and grewsome feast
And hideous mirth of ghoul and ghost,
As on they crowded from the East.

The willow, gathered into sheaves
Of scorpions by spectral arms,
Swung to and fro, and whipped the eaves,
And filled the house with weird alarms
That hissed from all its tortured leaves.

And in the midnight came the rain;—
In spiteful needles at the first;
But soon on roof and window-pane
The slowly gathered fury burst
In floods that came, and came again,

And poured their roaring burden out.
They swept along the sounding street,
Then paused, and then with shriek and shout
Hurtled as if a myriad feet
Had joined the dread and deafening rout.

But ere the welcome morning broke,
The loud wind fell, though gray and chill
The drizzling rain and drifting smoke
Drove slowly toward the westward hill,
Half hidden in its phantom cloak.

And through the mist a clumsy smack,
Deep loaded with her clumsy freight,
With shifting boom and frequent tack,
Like a huge ghost that wandered late,
Reeled by upon her devious track.

XIX.

So Mildred, with prophetic ken,
Saw in the long and rainy day
The dreaded host of friendly men
And friendly women, kept away,
And time for love, and book, and pen.

But while she looked, with dreaming eyes
And heart content, upon the scene,
She saw a stalwart man arise
Where the wild water lashed the green,
And pause a breath, to signalize

Some one beyond her stinted view;
Then turn with hurried feet, and straight
The deep, rain-burdened grasses through,
And through the manse's open gate,
Pass to her door. At once she knew

That some faint soul, in sad extreme,
Had sent for succor to the manse,
And knew its master would redeem
To sacred use the circumstance
That made such havoc of her dream.

XX.

She saw the quiet men depart,
She saw them leave the river-side,
She saw them brave with sturdy art
The surges of the angry tide,
And disappear; the while her heart

Sank down in dismal loneliness.
Then came her vexing thoughts again;
And quick, as if she broke duress
Of heavy weariness or pain,
She sought the study's dim recess,

Where rank on rank, against the wall,
The mighty men of every land
Stood mutely waiting for the call
Of him who, with his single hand,
Had bravely met and mastered all.

The gray old monarchs of the pen
Looked down with calm, benignant gaze,
And Augustine and Origen
And Ansel justified the ways—
The wondrous ways—of God with men.

Among the tall hierophants
Angelical Aquinas stood;
While Witsius held the "Covenants,"
And Irenæus, wise and good,
Couched low his silver-bearded lance

For strife with heresy and schism,
And Turretin with lordly nod
Gave system to the dogmatism
That analyzed the thought of God
As light is painted by a prism.

Great Luther, with his great disputes,
And Calvin, with his finished scheme,
And Charnock, with his "Attributes,"
And Taylor with his poet's dream
Of theologic flowers and flutes,

And Thomas Fuller, old and quaint,
And Cudworth, dry with dust of gold,
And South, the sharp and witty saint,
With Howe and Owen—broad and bold—
And Leighton still without the taint

Of earth upon his robe of white,
Stood side by side with Hobbes and Locke,
And, braced by many an acolyte,
With Edwards standing on his rock,
And all New England's men of might,

Whose gifts and offices divine
Had crowned her with a kingly crown,
And solemn doctors from the Rhine,
With Fichte, Kant, and Hegel, down
Through all the long and stately line!

As Mildred saw the awful host,
She felt within no motive stir
To realize her girlish boast,
And knew they held no more for her
Than if each volume were a ghost.

XXI.

She sat in Philip's vacant chair,
And pondered long her doubtful way;
And, in her impotent despair,
Lifted her longing eyes to pray,
When on a shelf, far up, and bare,

She saw an ancient volume lie;
And straight her rising thought was checked.
What were its dubious treasures? Why
Had it been banished from respect,
And from its owner's hand and eye?

The more she gazed, the stronger grew
The wish to hold it in her hand.
Strange fancies round the volume flew,
And changed the dust their pinions fanned
To atmospheres of red and blue,

That blent in purple aureole,—
As if a lymph of sweetest life
Stood warm within a golden bowl,
Crowned with its odor-cloud, and rife
With strength and solace for her soul!

And there it lay beyond her arm,
And wrought its fine and wondrous spell,
With all its hoard of good or harm,
Till curious Mildred, struggling well,
Surrendered to the mighty charm.

The steps were scaled for boon or bale,
The book was lifted from its place,
And, bowing to the fragrant grail,
She drank with pleased and eager face
This draught from off an Eastern tale:

Isa 28:5.

Selim, the haughty Jehangir, the Conqueror of the Earth,
With royal pomps and pageantries and rites of festal mirth
Was set to celebrate the day—the white day—of his birth.

His red pavilions, stretching wide, crowned all with globes of gold,
And tipped with pinnacles of fire and streamers manifold,
Flamed with such splendor that the sun at noon looked pale and cold!

And right and left, along the plain, far as the eye could gaze,
His nobles and retainers who were tented in the blaze,
Kept revel high in honor of that day of all the days.

The earth was spread, the walls were hung, with silken fabrics fine,
And arabesque and lotus-flower bore each the broidered sign
Of jewels plucked from land and sea, and red gold from the mine.

Upon his throne he sat alone, half buried in the gems
That strewed his tapestries like stars, and tipped their tawny hems,
And glittered with the glory of a hundred diadems.

He saw from his pavilion door the nodding heron-plumes
His nobles wore upon their brows, while, from the rosy glooms
Which hid his harem, came low songs, on wings of rare perfumes!

The elephants, a thousand strong, had passed his dreaming eye,
Caparisoned with golden plates on head and breast and thigh,
And a hundred flashing troops of horse unmarked had thundered by.

He sat upon old Akbar's throne, the heir of power and fame;
But all his glory was as dust, and dust his wondrous name—

Swept into air, and scattered far, by one consuming
flame!

For on that day of all the days, and in that festal hour,
He sickened with his glory and grew weary of his power,
And pined to bind upon his breast his harem's choicest
flower.

"Oh Nourmahal! oh Nourmahal! why sit I here," he
cried,—
"The victim of these gaudy shows, and of my haughty
pride, Isa 28:3.
When thou art dearer to my soul than all the world be-
side!

"Thy eyes are brighter than the gems piled round my
gilded seat;

Thy cheeks are softer than the silks that shimmer at my feet,
And purer heart than thine in woman's breast hath never beat!

"My first love—and my only love—Oh babe of Candahar!
Torn from my boyish arms at first, and, like a silver star
Shining within another heaven, and worshipped from afar,

"Thou art my own at last, my own! I pine to see thy face;
Come to me, Nourmahal! Oh come, and hallow with thy grace
The glories that without thy love are meaningless and base!"

He spoke a word, and, quick as light, before him lying prone
A dark-eyed page, with gilded vest and crimson-belted zone,
Looked up with waiting ear to mark the message from the throne.

"Go summon Nourmahal, my queen; and when her radiance comes,
Bear my command of silence to the vinas and the drums,
And for your guerdon take your choice of all these gilded crumbs."

He tossed a handful of the gems down where his minion lay,
Who snatched a jewel from the drift, and swiftly sped away
With his command to Nourmahal, who waited to obey.

But needlessly the mandate fell of silence on the crowd,
For when the Empress swept the path, ten thousand heads were bowed,
And drum and vina ceased their din, and no one spoke aloud.

As comes the moon from out the sea with her attendant breeze,
As sweeps the morning up the hills and blossoms in the trees,
So Nourmahal to Selim came: then fell upon her knees!

The envious jewels looked at her with chill, barbaric stare,
The cloth-of-gold she knelt upon grew lusterless and bare,
And all the place was cooler in the darkness of her hair.

And while she knelt in queenly pride and beauty strange and wild,
And held her breast with both her palms and looked on him and smiled,
She seemed no more of common earth, but Casyapa's child.

He bent to her as thus she smiled; he kissed her lifted cheek;
"Oh Nourmahal," he murmured low, "more dear than I can speak,
I'm weary of my lonely life: give me the rest I seek."

She rose and paced the silken floor, as if in mad caprice,
Then paused, and from the Empress changed to improvisatrice,
And wove this song—a golden chain—that led him into peace:

Lovely children of the light,
Draped in radiant locks and pinions,—
Red and purple, blue and white—
In their beautiful dominions,
On the earth and in the spheres,
Dwell the little glendoveers.

And the red can know no change,
And the blue are blue forever,
And the yellow wings may range
Toward the white or purple never.
But they mingle free from strife,
For their color is their life.

When their color dies, they die,—
Blent with earth or ether slowly—
Leaving where their spirits lie,

Not a stain, so pure and holy
Is the essence and the thought
Which their fading brings to naught!

Each contented with the hue
Which indues his wings of beauty,
Red or yellow, white or blue,
Sings the measure of his duty
Through the summer clouds in peace,
And delights that never cease.

Not with envy love they more
Locks and pinions purple-tinted,
Nor with jealousy adore
Those whose pleasures are unstinted,
And whose purple hair and wings
Give them place with queens and kings.

When a purple glendoveer
Flits along the mute expanses,
They surround him, far and near,
With their glancing wings and dances,
And do honor to the hue
Loved by all and worn by few.

In the days long gone, alas!
Two upon a cloud, low-seated,
Saw their pinions in the glass
Of a silver lake repeated.
One was blue and one was red,
And the lovely pair were wed.

"Purple wings are very fine,"
Spoke the voice of Ruby, gently:
"Ay," said Sapphire, "they're divine!"—

Looking at his blue intently.
"But we're blest," said Ruby, then,
"And we'll not complain like men."

Sapphire stretched his loving arms,
And she nestled on his bosom,
While his heart inhaled her charms
As the sense inhales a blossom;—
Drank her wholly, tint and tone,
Blent her being with his own.

Rapture passed, they raised their eyes,
But were startled into clamor
Of a marvellous surprise!
Was it color! was it glamour!
Purple-tinted, sweet and warm,
Was each wing and folded form!

Who had wrought it—how it came—
These were what the twain disputed.
How were mingled smoke and flame
Into royal hue transmuted?
Each was right, the other wrong:
But their quarrel was not long,

For the moment that their speech
Differed o'er their little story,
Swiftly faded off from each
Every trace of purple glory;
Blue was bluer than before,
And the red was red once more.

Then they knew that both were wrong,
And in sympathy of sorrow
Learned that each was only strong

In the power to lend and borrow,—
That the purple never grew
But by grace of red to blue.

So, embracing in content,
Hearts and wings again united,
Red and blue in purple blent,
And their holy troth replighted,
Both, as happy as the day,
Kissed, and rose, and flew away!

And for twice a thousand years,
Floating through the radiant ether,
Lived the happy glendoveers,
Of the other, jealous neither,—
Sapphire naught without the red,
Ruby still by blue bested.

But when weary of their life,
They came down to earth at even—
Purple husband, purple wife—
From the upper deeps of heaven,
And reclined upon the grass,
That their little lives might pass.

Wing to wing and arms enwreathed,
Sank they from their life's long dreaming;—
Into earth their souls they breathed;
But when morning's light was streaming,
All their joys and sweet regrets
Bloomed in banks of violets!

As from its dimpled fountain, at its own capricious will,
Each step a note of music, and each fall and flash a thrill,
The rill goes singing to the meadow levels and is still,

So fell from Nourmahal her song upon the captive sense;
It dashed in spray against the throne, it tinkled through the tents,
And died at last among the flowery banks of recompense;

For when great Selim marked her fire, and read her riddle well,
And watched her from the flushing to the fading of the spell,
He sprang forgetful from his seat, and caught her as she fell.

He raised her in his tender arms; he bore her to his throne:
"No more, oh! Nourmahal, my wife, no more I sit alone;
And the future for the dreary past shall royally atone!"

He called to him the princes and the nobles of the land,
Then took the signet-ring from his, and placed it on her hand,
And bade them honor as his own, fair Nourmahal's command.

And on the minted silver that his largess scattered wide,
And on the gold of commerce, till the mighty Selim died,
Her name and his in shining boss stood equal, side by side.

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XXII.

The opening of the wondrous tome
Was like the opening of a door
Into a vast and pictured dome,
Crowded, from vaulted roof to floor,
With secrets of her life and home.

To be like Philip was to be
Another Philip—only less!
To win his wit in full degree
Would bear to him but nothingness,
From one no wiser grown than he!

If blue and red in Hindostan
Were blue and red at home, she knew
That she—a woman, he—a man,
Could never wear the royal hue
Till blue and red together ran

In complement of each to each;
She might not tint his life at all
By learning wisdom he could teach;
So what she gave, though poor and small,
Should be of that beyond his reach.

Where Philip fed, she would not feed;
Where Philip walked, she would not go;
The books he read she would not read,
But live her separate life, and, so,
Have sole supplies to meet his need.

He held his mission and his range;
His way and work were all his own;
And she would give him in exchange
What she could win and she alone,
Of life and learning, fresh and strange.

XXIII.

While thus she sat in musing mood,
Determining her life's emprise,
The sunlight flushed the distant wood,
Then, coming closer, filled her eyes,
And glorified her solitude.

The clouds were shivered by the lance
Sped downward by the morning sun,
And from her heart, in swift advance,
The shadows vanished, one by one,
Till more than sunlight filled the manse.

She closed the volume with a gust
That sprent the light with powdered gold;
Then placed it high to hide and rust
Where, curious and over-bold
She found it, lying in its dust.

Her soul was light, her path was plain;
One shadow only drooped above,—
The shadow of a heart and brain
So charged with overwhelming love
That it oppressed and gave her pain.

The modest comb that kept her hair;
To Philip was a golden crown;
And every ringlet was a snare,
And every hat, and every gown
And slipper, something more than fair.

His love had glorified her grace,
And she was his, and not her own,—
So wholly his she had no place
Beside him on his lonely throne,
Or share in love's divine embrace.

And knowing that the coming days
Would strip her features of their mask,
That duty then would speak her praise,
And love become a loyal task,
Save he should find beneath the glaze

His fiery love of her had spread,
Diviner things he had not seen,
She feared her woman's heart and head
Were armed with charms and powers too mean
To win the boon she coveted.

But still she saw and held her plan,
And fear made way for springing hope.
If she was man's, then hers was man:
Both held their own in even scope;
And then and there her life began.

LOVE'S PHILOSOPHIES.

LOVE'S PHILOSOPHIES.

———o———

I.

A WIFE is like an unknown sea;—
Least known to him who thinks he knows
Where all the shores of promise be,
Where lie the islands of repose,
And where the rocks that he must flee.

Capricious winds, uncertain tides,
Drive the young sailor on and on,
Till all his charts and all his guides
Prove false, and vain conceit is gone,
And only docile love abides.

Where lay the shallows of the maid,
No plummet line the wife may sound;
Where round the sunny islands played
The pulses of the great profound,
Lies low the treacherous everglade.

And sailing, he becomes, perforce,
Discoverer of a lovely world;
And finds, whate'er may be his course,
Green lands within white seas impearled,
And streams of unsuspected source

Which feed with gold delicious fruits,
Kept by unguessed Hesperides,
Or cool the lips of gentle brutes
That breed and browse among the trees
Whose wind-tossed limbs and leaves are lutes.

The maiden free, the maiden wed,
Can never, never be the same.
A new life springs from out the dead,
And, with the speaking of a name,
A breath upon the marriage-bed,

She finds herself a something new—
(Which he learns later, but no less);
And good and evil, false and true,
May change their features—who can guess?—
Seen close, or from another view.

For maiden life, with all its fire,
Is hid within a grated cell,
Where every fancy and desire
And graceless passion, guarded well,
Sits dumb behind the woven wire.

Marriage is freedom: only when
The husband turns the prison-key
Knows she herself; nor even then
Knows she more wisely well than he,
Who finds himself least wise of men.

New duties bring new powers to birth,
And new relations, new surprise
Of depths of weakness or of worth,
Until he doubt if her disguise
Mask more of heaven, or more of earth.

Tears spring beneath a careless touch;
Endurance hardens with a word;
She holds a trifle with a clutch
So strangely, childishly absurd,
That he who loves and pardons much

Doubts if her wayward wit be sane,
When straight beyond his manly power
She stiffens to the awful strain
Of some supreme or crucial hour,
And stands unblanched in fiercest pain!

A jealous thought, a petty pique,
Enwraps in gloom, or bursts in storm;
She questions all that love may speak,
And weighs its tone, and marks its form,
Or yields her frailty to a freak

That vexes him or breeds disgust;
Then rises in heroic flame,
And treads a danger into dust,
Or puts his doubting soul to shame
With love unfeigned and perfect trust.

Still seas unknown the husband sails;
Life-long the lovely marvel lasts;
In golden calms or driving gales,
With silent prow or reeling masts,
Each hour a fresh surprise unveils.

The brooding, threatening bank of mist
Grows into groups of virid isles,
By sea embraced and sunlight kissed,
Or breaks into resplendent smiles
Of cinnabar and amethyst!

No day so bright but scuds may fall,
No day so still but winds may blow;
No morn so dismal with the pall
Of wintry storm, but stars may glow
When evening gathers, over all!

And so thought Philip, when, in haste
Returning from his lengthened stay—
The river and the lawn retraced—
He found his Mildred blithe and gay,
And all his anxious care a waste.

To be half vexed that she could thrive
Without him through a morning's span,
Upon the honey in her hive,
Was but to prove himself a man,
And show that he was quite alive!

II.

A sympathetic word or kiss,
(Mildred had insight to discern,)
Though grateful quite, is quite amiss,
In leading to the life etern
The soul that has no bread in this.

The present want must aye be fed,
And first relieved the present care:
"Give us this day our daily bread"
Must be recited in our prayer
Before "forgive us" may be said.

And he who lifts a soul from vice,
And leads the way to better lands;
Must part his raiment, share his slice,
And oft with weary, bleeding hands,
Pave the long path with sacrifice.

So on a pleasant summer morn,
Wrapped in her motive, sweet and safe,
She sought the homes of sin and scorn,
And found her little Sunday waif
Ragged, and hungry, and forlorn.

She called her quickly to her knee;
And with her came a motley troop
Of children, poor and foul as she,
Who gathered in a curious group,
And ceased their play, to hear and see.

Tanned brown by all the summer suns,
With brutish brows and vacant eyes,
They drank her speech and ate her buns,
While she behind their sad disguise
Beheld her dear Lord's "little ones."

She stood like Ruth amid the wheat,
With ready hand and sickle keen,
And looked on all with aspect sweet;
For where she only thought to glean,
She found a harvest round her feet.

Ah! little need the tale to write
Of garments begged from door to door,
Of needles plying in the night,
And money gathered from the store
Alike of screw and Sybarite,

With which to clothe the little flock.
She went like one sent forth of God
To loose the bolts of heart and lock,
And with the smiting of her rod
To call a flood from every rock.

And little need the tale to tell
How, when the Sunday came again,
A wondrous change the group befell,
And how from every noisome den,
Responding to the chapel bell,

They issued forth with shout and call,
And Mildred walking at their head,
Who, with her silken parasol,
Bannered the army that she led,
And with low words commanded all.

The little army walked through smiles
That hung like lamps above their march,
And lit their swart and straggling files,
While bending elm and plumy larch
Shaped into broad cathedral aisles

The paths that led with devious trend
To where the ivied chapel stood.
There their long passage found its end,
And there they gathered in a brood
Of gentle clamor round their friend.

A score pressed in on either side
To share the burden of her care,
And hearts and house gave entrance wide
To those to whom the words of prayer
Were stranger than the curse of pride.

And Mildred who, without a thought
Of glory in her week's long task,
This marvel of the week had wrought,
Had earned the boon she would not ask,
And won more love than she had sought.

III.

As two who walk through forest aisles,
Lit all the way by forest flowers,
Divide at morn through twin defiles
To meet again in distant hours,
With plunder plucked from all the miles,

So Philip and his Mildred went
Into their walks of daily life,—
Parting at morn with sweet consent,
And—tireless husband, busy wife—
Together when the day was spent,

Bringing the treasures they had won
From sundered tracks of enterprise,
To learn from each what each had done,
And prove each other grown more wise
Than when the morning was begun.

He strengthened her with manly thought
And learning, gathered from the great;
And she, whose quicker eye had caught
The treasures of the broad estate
Of common life and learning, brought

Her gleanings from the level field,
And gave them gladly to his hands,
Who had not dreamed that they could yield
Such sheaves, or hold within their bands
Such wealth of lovely flowers concealed.

His grave discourse, his judgment sure,
Gave tone and temper to her soul,
While her swift thoughts and vision pure,
And mirth that would not brook control,
And wit that kept him insecure

Within his dignified repose,
Refreshed and quickened him like wine.
No tender word or dainty gloze
Could give him pleasure half so fine
As that which tingled to her blows.

He gave her food for heart and mind,
And raised her toward his higher plane;
She showed him that his eyes were blind;
She proved his lofty wisdom vain,
And held him humbly with his kind.

IV.

Oh blessed sleep! in which exempt
From our tired selves long hours we lie,
Our vapid worthlessness undreamt,
And our poor spirits saved thereby
From perishing of self-contempt!

We weary of our petty aims;
We sicken with our selfish deeds;
We shrink and shrivel in the flames
That low desire ignites and feeds,
And grudge the debt that duty claims.

Oh sweet forgetfulness of sleep!
Oh bliss, to drop the pride of dress,
And all the shams o'er which we weep,
And, toward our native nothingness,
To drop ten thousand fathoms deep!

At morning only—strong, erect—
We face our mirrors not ashamed;
For then alone we meet, unflecked
The image we at evening blamed,
And find refreshed our self-respect.

Ah! little wonderment that those,
Who see us most and love us best,
Find that a true affection grows
The more when, in its parted nest,
It spends long hours in lone repose!

Our fruit grows dead in pulp and rind
When seen and handled overmuch;
The roses fade, our fingers bind;
And with familiar kiss and touch
The graces wither from our kind.

Man lives on love, at love's expense,
And woman, so her love be sweet;
Best honey palls upon the sense
When it is tempted to repeat
Too oft its fine experience.

And Mildred, with instinctive skill,
And loving neither most nor least,
Stood out from Philip's grasping will,
And gave, where he desired a feast,
The taste that left him hungry still.

She hid her heart behind a mask,
And held him to his manly course;
One hour in love she bade him bask,
And then she drove, with playful force,
The laggard to his daily task.

They went their way and kept their care,
And met again their toil complete,
Like angels on a heavenly stair,
Or pilgrims in a golden street,
Grown stronger one, and one more fair!

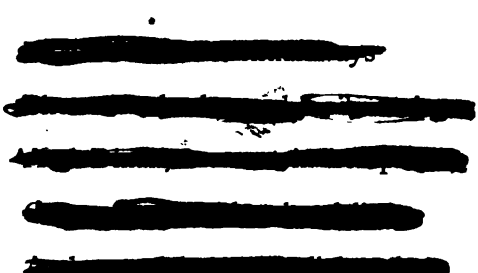
V.

As one worn down by petty pains,
With fevered head and restless limb,
Flies from the toil that stings and stains,
And all the cares that wearied him,
And some far, silent summit gains;

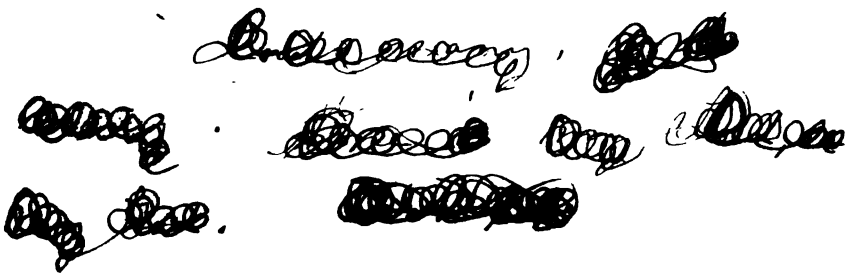
And in its strong, sweet
Or in the blue,
Finds his discom
And loses in the pu
The garnered hum

And sees not how and knows not when
The old vexations leave their seat,
So Philip, happiest of men,
Saw all his petty cares retreat,
And vanish, not to come again.

Where he had thought to shield and serve,
Himself had ministry instead;
He heard no vexing call to swerve
From larger toil, for labors sped
By smaller hand and finer nerve.



And many a sad and stricken maid,
And many a lorn and widowed life
That came for counsel or for aid
To Philip, met the pastor's wife,
And on her heart their burden laid.



VI.

He gave her what she took—her will;
And made it space for life full-orbed.
He learned at last that every rill
Loses its freshness, when absorbed
By the great stream that turns the mill.

With hand ungrasping for her dower,
He found its royal income his;
And every swiftly kindling power—
Self-moved in its activities—
Becoming brighter every hour.

The air is sweet which we inspire
When it is free to come and go;
And sound of brook and scent of briar
Rise freshest where the breezes blow,
That feed our breath and fan our fire.

That love is weak which is too strong;
A man may be a woman's grave;
The right of love swells oft to wrong,
And silken bonds may bind a slave
As truly as a leathern thong.

We may not dine upon the bird
That fills our home with minstrelsy;
The living vine may never gird
Too firm and close the living tree,
Without sad sacrifice incurred.

The crystal goblet that we drain
Will be forever after dry;
But he who sips, and sips again,
And leaves it to the open sky,
Will find it filled with dew and rain.

The lilies burst, the roses blow
Into divinest balm and bloom,
When free above and free below;
And life and love must have large room,
That life and love may largest grow.

So Philip learned (what Mildred saw),
That love was like a well profound,
From which two souls had right to draw,
And in whose waters would be drowned
The one who took the other's law.

VII.

Ambition was an alien word,
Which Mildred faintly understood;
Its poisoned breathing had not blurred
The whiteness of her womanhood,
Nor had its blatant trumpet stirred

To quicker pulse her heart content.
In social tasks and home employ,
She did not question what it meant;
But bore her woman's lot with joy
And sweetness, wheresoe'er she went.

If ever with unconscious thrill
It touched her, in some vagrant dream,
She only wished that God would fill
With larger tide the goodly stream
That flowed beside her, strong and still.

She knew that love was more than fame,
And happy conscience more than love;—
Far off and wild, the wings of flame!
Close by, the pinions of the dove
That hovered white above her name!

She honored Philip as a man,
And joyed in his supreme estate;
But never dreamed that under ban
She lives who never can be great,
Or chieftain of a crowd or clan.

The public eye was like a knife
That pierced and plagued her shrinking heart.
To be a woman, and a wife,
With privilege to dwell apart,
And hold unseen her modest life—

Alike from praise and blame aloof,
And free to live and move in peace
Beneath love's consecrated roof—
Was boon so great she could not cease
Her thanks for the divine behoof.

Black turns to brown and blue to blight
Beneath the blemish of the sun;
And e'en the spotless robe of white,
Worn overlong, grows dim and dun
Through the strange alchemy of light.

Nor wives nor maidens, weak or brave,
Can stand and face the public stare,
And win the plaudits that they crave,
And stem the hisses that they dare,
And modest truth and beauty save.

No woman, in her soul, is she
Who longs to poise above the roar
Of motley multitudes, and be
The idol at whose feet they pour
The wine of their idolatry.

Coarse labor makes its doer coarse;
Great burdens harden softest hands;
A gentle voice grows harsh and hoarse
That warns and threatens and commands
Beyond the measure of its force.

Oh sweet, beyond all speech, to feel
Within no answer to the drum,
Or echo to the bugle-peal,
That calls to duties which benumb
In service of the commonweal!

Oh sweet to feel, beyond all speech,
That most and best of human kind
Have leave to live beyond the reach
Of toil that tarnishes, and find
No tongue but Envy's to impeach!

Oh sweet, that most unnoticed deeds
Give play to fine, heroic blood!—
That hid from light, and shut from weeds,
The rose is fairer in its bud
Than in the blossom that succeeds!

He is the helpless slave who must;
And she enfranchised who may sit
Unblamed above the din and dust,
Where stronger hands and coarser wit
Strive equally for crown and crust.

So ran her thought, and broader yet,
Who scanned her own by Philip's pace;
And never did the wife forget
Her grateful tribute for the grace
That charged her with so sweet a debt.

So ran her thought; and in her breast
Her wifely pride to pity grew,
That Philip, by his Lord's behest—
To duty and to nature true—
Must do his bravest and his best,

Through winter's cold and summer's heat,
Where all might praise and all might blame,
And thus be topic of the street,
And see his fair and honest name
A football, kicked by careless feet.

She loved her creed, and doubting not
She read it well from Nature's scroll,
She found no line or word to blot;
But, from her woman's modest soul,
Thanked her Creator for her lot.

VIII.

He who, upon an Alpine peak,
Stands, when the sunrise lifts the East,
And gilds the crown and lights the cheek
Of largest monarch down to least,
Of all the summits cold and bleak,

Finds sadly that it brings no boon
For all his long and toilsome leagues,
And chill at once and weary soon,
Rests from his fevers and fatigues,
And waits the recompense of noon.

For then the valleys, near and far,
The hillsides, fretted by the vine,
The glacier-drift and torrent-scar
Whose restless waters shoot and shine,
And many a tarn, that like a star

Trembles and flames with stress of light,
And many a hamlet and chalet
That dots with brown, or paints with white,
The landscape quivering in the day,
With beauty all his toil requite.

Mountains, from mountain altitudes
Are only hills; as bleak and bare;
And he whose daring step intrudes
Upon their grandeur, and the rare
Cold light or gloom that o'er them broods,

Finds that with even brow to stand
Among the heights that bade him climb,
Is loss of all that made them grand,
While all of lovely and sublime
Looks up to him from lake and land.

Great men are few, and stand apart;
And seem divinest when remote.
From brain to brain, and heart to heart,
No thoughts of genial commerce float;
Each holds his own exclusive mart.

And when we meet them, face to face,
And hand to hand their greatness greet,
Our steps we willingly retrace,
And gather humbly at their feet,
With those who live upon their grace.

And man and woman—mount and vale—
Have charms, each from the other seen,—
The robe of rose, the coat of mail:
The springing turf, the black ravine:
The tossing pines, the waving swale:

Which please the sight with constant joy.
Thus living, each has power to call
The other's thoughts with sweet decoy,
And one can rise and one can fall
But to distemper or destroy.

The dewy meadow breeds the cloud
That rises on ethereal wings,
And wraps the mountain in a shroud
From which the living lightning springs
And torrents pour, that, lithe and loud,

Leap down in service to the plains,
Or feed the fountains at their source;
And only thus the mountain gains
The vital fulness of the force
That fills the meadow's myriad veins.

In fair, reciprocal exchange
Of good which each appropriates,
The meadow and the mountain-range
Nourish their beautiful estates;
And lofty wild and lowly grange

Thrive on the commerce thus ordained;
And not a reek ascends the rock,
And not a drift of dew is rained,
But eyrie-brood and tended flock
By the sweet gift is entertained.

A meadow may be fair and broad,
And hold a river in its rest;
Or small, and with the silver gaud
Of a lone lakelet on its breast,
Or but a patch, that, overawed,

Clings humbly to the mountain's hem:
It matters not: it is the charm
That cheers his life, and holds the stem
Of every flower that tempts his arm,
Or greets his snowy diadem.

Dolts talk of largest and of least,
And worse than dolts are they who prate
Of Beauty captive to the Beast;
For man in woman finds his mate,
And thrones her equal at his feast.

She matches meekness with his might,
And patience with his power to act,—
His judgment with her quicker sight;
And wins by subtlety and tact
The battles he can only fight.

And she who strives to take the van
In conflict, or the common way,
Does outrage to the heavenly plan,
And outrage to the finer clay
That makes her beautiful to man.

All this, and more than this, she saw
Who reigned in Philip's house and heart.
Far off, he seemed without a flaw;
Close by, her tasteless counterpart,
And slave to Nature's common law.

To climb with fierce, familiar stride
His dizzy paths of life and thought,
Would but degrade him from her pride,
And bring the majesty to naught
Which love and distance magnified.

If she should grow like him, she knew
He would admire and love her less;
The eagle's image might be true,
But eagle of the wilderness
Would find no consort in the view.

A woman, in her woman's sphere,
A loyal wife and worshipper,
She only thirsted to appear
As fair to him as he to her,
And fairer still, from year to year.

And he who quickly learned to purge
His fancy of the tender whim
That she was floating at the verge
Of womanhood, half hid to him,
Saw her with gracious mien emerge,

And stand full-robed upon the shore,
With faculties and charms unguessed;
With wondrous eyes that looked before,
And hands that helped and words that blessed—
The mistress of an alien lore

Beyond the wisdom of the schools
And all his manly power to win;
With handicraft of tricks and tools
That conjured marvels with a pin,
And miracles with skeins and spools!

She seemed to mock his dusty dearth
With flowers that sprang beneath his eyes;
Till all he was, seemed little worth,
And she he deemed so little wise,
Became the wisest of the earth.

In all the struggles of his soul,
And all the strifes his soul abhorred,
She shone before him like a goal—
A shady power of fresh reward—
A shallop riding in the mole,

That waited with obedient helm
To bear him over sparkling seas,
Into a new and fragrant realm,
Before the vigor of a breeze
That drove, but would not overwhelm.

IX.

The river of their life was one;
The shores down which they passed were two;
One mirrored mountains, huge and dun,
The other crimped the green and blue,
And sparkled in the kindly sun!

Twin barks, with answering flags, they moved
With even canvas down the stream,
In smooth or ruffled waters grooved,
And found such islands in their dream
As rest and loving speech behooved.

Ah fair the goodly gardens smiled
On Philip at his rougher strand!
And grandly loomed the summits, isled
In seas of cloud, to her who scanned
From her far shore the lofty wild.

Two lives, two loves—both self-forgot
In loving homage to their oath;
Two lives, two loves, but living not
By ministry that reached them both
In service of a common lot,

They sailed the stream, and every mile
Broadened with beauty as they passed;
And fruitful shore and trysting-isle,
And all love's intercourse were glassed
And blessed in Heaven's benignant smile.

X.

To symmetry the oak is grown
Which all winds visit on the lea,
While that which lists the monotone
Of the long blast that sweeps the sea,
And answers to its breath alone,

Turns with aversion from the breeze,
And stretches all its stunted limbs
Landward and heavenward, toward the trees
That listen to a thousand hymns,
And grow to grander destinies.

Man may not live on whitest loaves,
With all of coarser good dismissed;
He pines and starves who never roves
Beyond the holy eucharist,
To gather of the fields and groves.

And he who seeks to fill his heart
With solace of a single friend,
Will find refreshment but in part,
Or, sadder still, will find the end
Of all his reach of thought and art.

They who love best need friendship most;
Hearts only thrive on varied good;
And he who gathers from a host
Of friendly hearts his daily food,
Is the best friend that we can boast.

She left her husband with his friends;
She called them round him at her board;
And found their culture made amends
For all the time that, from her hoard,
She spared him for these nobler ends.

He was her lover; that sufficed:
His home was in the Holy Place
With that of the Beloved Christ;
And friendship had no subtle grace
By which his love could be enticed.

Of all his friends, she was but one:
She held with them a common field.
Exclusive right, with love begun,
Ended with love, and stood repealed,
Leaving his friendship free to run

Toward man or woman, all unmissed.
She knew she had no right to bind
His friendship to her single wrist,
So long as love was true and kind,
And made her its monopolist.

No time was grudged with jealous greed
Which either books or friendship claimed.
He was her friend, and she had need
Of all—unhindered and unblamed
That he could win, through word or deed.

Her friend waxed great as grew the man;
Her temple swelled as rose her priest—
With power to bless and right to ban—
And all who served him, most or least,—
From chorister and sacristan

To those whose frankincense and myrrh
Perfumed the sacred courts with alms,—
Were gracious ministers to her,
Who found the largess in her palms,
And him the friendly almoner.

LOVE'S CONSUMMATIONS.

LOVE'S CONSUMMATIONS.

THE summer passed, the autumn came;
The world swung over toward the night;
The forests robed themselves in flame,
Then faded slowly into white;
And set within a crystal frame

Of frozen streams, the shaggy boles
Of oak and elm, with leafless crowns,
Were painted stark upon the knolls;
And cots and villages and towns
On virgin canvas glowed like coals

In tawny red, or strove in vain
To shame the white in which they stood.
The fairest tint was but a stain
Upon the snow, that quenched the wood,
And paved the street, and draped the plain!

II.

Oh! Southern cheeks are quick to feel
The magic finger of the frost;
And Mildred heard but one long peal
From the fierce Arctic, which embossed
Her window-panes, and set the seal

Of cold on all her eye beheld,
When through her veins there swept new fire,
And, in her answering bosom, swelled
New purposes and new desire,
And force to higher deeds impelled.

Ah! well for her the languor cast
That followed from her Southern clime!
The time would come—was coming fast,—
Love's consummated, crowning time—
Of which her heart had antepast!

A strange new life was in her breast;
Her eyes were full of wondrous dreams;
She sailed all whiles from crest to crest
Of a broad ocean, through whose gleams
She saw an island wrapped in rest!

And as she drove across the sea,
Toward the fair port that fixed her gaze,
Her life was like a rosary,
Whose slowly counted beads were days
Of prayer for one that was to be!

III.

Oh roses, roses! Who shall sing
The beauty of the flowers of God!
Or thank the angel from whose wing
The seeds are scattered on the sod
From which such bloom and perfume spring!

Sure they have heavenly genesis
Which make a heaven of every place;
Which company our bale and bliss,
And never to our sinning race
Speak aught unhallowed, or amiss!

When love is grieved, their buds atone;
When love is wed, their forms are near;
They blend their breathing with the moan
Of love when dying, and the bier
Is white with them in every zone.

No spot is mean that they begem;
No nosegay fair that holds them not;
They melt the pride and stir the phlegm
Of lord and churl, in court and cot,
And weave a common diadem

For human brows where'er they grow.
They write all languages of red,
They speak all dialects of snow,
And all the words of gold are said
With fragrant meanings where they blow!

Oh sweetest flowers! Oh flowers divine!
In which God comes so closely down,
We gather from his chosen sign
The tints that cluster in his crown—
The perfume of his breath benign!

Oh sweetest flowers! Oh flowers that hold
The fragrant life of Paradise
For a brief day, shut fold in fold,
That we may drink it in a trice,
And drop the empty pink and gold!

Oh sweetest flowers, that have a breath
For every passion that we feel!
That tell us what the Master saith
Of blessing, in our woe and weal,
And all events of life and death!

IV.

The time of roses came again;
And one had bloomed within the manse,—
Bloomed in a burst of midnight pain,
And plumed its life in fair expanse,
Beneath love's nursing sun and rain.

In calyx fair of lilied lawn,
Wrapped in the mosses of the lamb,
Long days it lightened toward the dawn
Of the bright-blushing oriflamme,
That on two happy faces shone.

Such tendance ne'er had flower before!
Such beauty ne'er had flower returned!
Found on that distant island-shore,
Whose secret she at last had learned,
And made her own for evermore,

Mildred consigned it to her breast;
And though she knew it took its hue
From her, it seemed the Lord's bequest,—
Still sparkling with the heavenly dew,
And still with heavenly beauty dressed.

Oh roses! ye were wondrous fair
That summer by the river side!
For hearts were blooming everywhere,
In sympathy of love and pride,
With that which came to Mildred's care.

And rose as red as rose could be
Filled Philip's breast with largest bloom,
And cast its fragrance far and free,
And filled his lonely, silent room
With rapture of paternity!

V.

The evening fell on field and street;
The glow-worm lit his phosphor lamp,
For fairy forms and fairy feet,
That gathered for their nightly tramp
Where grass was green and flowers were sweet.

In devious circles, round and round,
The night-hawk coursed the twilight sky,
Or shot like lightning the profound,
With breezy thunder in the cry
That marked his furious rebound!

The zephyrs breathed through elm and ash
From new-mown hay and heliotrope,
And came through Philip's open sash
With sheen of stars that lit the cope,
And twinkling of the fire-fly's flash.

He thought of Mildred and his boy;
And something moved him more than pride,
And purer than his manly joy;
For while these swelled with turbid tide,
His gratitude had no alloy.

He heard the baby's weary plaint;
He heard the mother's soothing words;
And sitting in his hushed restraint,
One voice was murmur of the birds,
And one the hymning of a saint!

And as he sat alone, immersed
In the fond fancies of the time,
Her voice in mellow music burst,
And by a rhythmic stair of rhyme
Led down to sleep the child she nursed.

"Rockaby, lullaby, bees in the clover!—
Crooning so drowsily, crying so low—
Rockaby, lullaby, dear little rover!
Down into wonderland—
Down to the under-land—
Go, oh go!
Down into wonderland go!

"Rockaby, lullaby, rain on the clover!
Tears on the eyelids that waver and weep!
Rockaby, lullaby—bending it over!

Down on the mother-world,
Down on the other world!
Sleep, oh sleep!
Down on the mother-world sleep!

"Rockaby, lullaby, dew on the clover!
Dew on the eyes that will sparkle at dawn!
Rockaby, lullaby, dear little rover!
Into the stilly world—
Into the lily world,
Gone! oh gone!
Into the lily-world, gone!"

VI.

They sprouted like the prophet's gourd;
They grew within a single night;
So swift his busy years were scored
That, ere he knew, his hope was white
With harvest bending round his board!

And eyes were black, and eyes were blue,
And blood of mother and of sire,
Each to its native humor true,
Blent Northern force with Southern fire
In strength and beauty, strange and new.

The Gallic brown, the Saxon snow,
The raven locks, the flaxen curls,
Were so commingled in the flow
Of the new blood of boys and girls,
That Puritan and Huguenot

In love's alembic were advanced
To higher types and finer forms;
And ardent humors thrilled and danced
Through veins that tempered all their storms,
Or held them in restraint entranced.

Oh! many times, as flew the years,
The dainty cradle-song was sung;
And bore its balm to restless ears,
As one by one the nested young
Slept in their willows and their tears.

To each within the reedy glade,
Hid from some tyrant's cruel schemes,
It was a princess, or her maid,
Who bore him to the realm of dreams,
And made him seer by accolade

Of flaming bush and parted deep,
Of gushing rocks and raining corn,
And fire and cloud, and lengthened sweep
Of thousands toward the promised morn,
Across the wilderness of sleep!

VII.

The years rolled on in grand routine
Of useful toil and chastening care,
Till Philip, grown to heights serene
Of conscious power, and ripe with prayer,
Took on the strong and stately mien

Of one on whom had been conferred
The doing of a knightly deed;
And waited till it bade him gird
The harness on him and his steed,
For man and for his Master's word.

His name was spoken far and near,
And sounded sweet on every tongue;
Men knew him only to revere,
And those who knew him nearest, flung
Their hearts before his grand career,

And paved his way with loyal trust.
He was their strongest, noblest man,—
Sworn foe of every selfish lust,
And brave to do as wise to plan,
And swift to judge as pure and just.

VIII.

Against such foil the mistress stood—
A pearl upon a cross of gold—
White with consistent womanhood,
And fixed with unrelaxing hold
Upon the centre of the rood!

Through all those years of loving thrift,
Nor blame nor discord marred their lot;
Each to the lover-life was gift;
And each was free from blur or blot
That called for silence or for shrift.

Each bore the burden that it held
With patient hands along the road;
And though, with passing years, it swelled
Until it grew a weary load,
Nor tongue complained, nor heart rebelled.

At length the time of trial came,
And they were tried as gold is tried.
Their peace of life went up in flame,
And what was good was vilified,
And what was blameless came to blame.

IX.

The Southern sky was dun with cloud;
And looming lurid o'er its edge
The brows of awful forms were bowed,
That forged in flame the fateful wedge
Which waited in the angry shroud

The banner of the storm unfurled,
And all the powers of death arrayed
In black battalions, to be hurled
Down through the rack—a blazing blade—
To cleave the realm, and shake the world!

The North was full of nameless dread;
Wild portents flamed from out the pole;
Old scars on Freedom's bosom bled,
And sick at heart and vexed of soul
She tossed in fever on her bed!

Pale Commerce hid her face and whined;
The arms of Toil were paralyzed;
The wise were of divided mind,
And those who counselled and advised
Were sightless leaders of the blind.

Men lost their faith in good and great;
No captain sprang, or prophet bard,
To win their trust, and save the state
From the wild storm that, like a pard,
On quivering haunches lay in wait!

The loyal only were not brave;
E'en peace became a cringing dog;
The patriot paltered like a knave,
And partisan and demagogue
Quarrelled o'er Freedom's waiting grave.

X.

Amid the turmoil and disgrace,
The voice was clear, from first to last,
Of one who, in the desert place
Of barren counsels, held him fast
His shepherd's crook, and made it mace

To bear before the Great Event
Whose harbinger he chose to be,
And called on all men to repent,
And build a way from sea to sea,
For Freedom's full enfranchisement.

For Philip, to his conscience leal,
Conceived that God had chosen him
With Treason's sophistries to deal,
And grapple with the Anakim
Whose menace shook the common weal.

His pulpit smoked beneath his blows;
His voice was heard in hall and street;
A thousand friends became his foes,
And pews were empty or replete,
With passion's ebbs and overflows.

They trailed his good name in the mire;
They spat their venom in his eyes;
They taunted him with mad desire
For power, and gathered his replies
In braver words and fiercer fire.

He was a wolf, disguised in wool;
He was a viper in the breast;
He was a villain, or the tool
Of greater villains; at the best,
A blind enthusiast and fool!

As swelled the tempest, rose the man;
He turned to sport their brutal spleen;
And none could choose be slow to span
The difference that lay between
A Prospero and a Caliban!

XI.

She would not move him otherwise,
Although her heart was sad and sore.
That which was venal in his eyes
To her a lovely aspect wore,
And helped to weave the thousand ties

Which bound her to her youth, and all
The loves that she had left behind
When, from her father's stately hall,
She came, her Northern home to find,
With him who held her heart in thrall.

In the dark pictures which he drew
Of instituted shame and wrong,
She saw no figures that she knew,
But a confused and hateful throng
Of forms that in his fancy grew.

Her father's rule, benign and mild,
Was all of slavery she had known;
To her, an Afric was a child—
A charge in other ages thrown
On Christian honor, from the wild

Of savagery in which the Fates
Had given him birth and dwelling-place—
And so, descending through estates
Of gentle vassalage, his race
Had come to those of later dates.

Black hands her baby form had dressed;
Black hands her blacker hair had curled;
And she had found a dusky breast
The sweetest breast in all the world
When she was thirsty or at rest.

Her playmates, in her native bowers,
Were darkest children of the sun,
Who built the palaces and towers
In which her reign, in love begun,
Gave foretaste of love's later hours.

Her memory was full of song
That she had learned in house and field,
From those whose days seemed never long,
And those who could not hold concealed
The consciousness of shame and wrong.

A loving ear heard their complaints;
A faithful tongue advised and warned;
And grave corrections and restraints
Were rendered by a heart adorned
By all the graces of the saints.

There was no touch of memory's chords—
No picture on her blooming wall,—
Of life upon the sunny swards
They reproduced,—but brought recall
Of happy slaves and gentle lords.

And Philip charged a deadly sin
Upon that beautiful domain,
Condemning all who dwelt therein,
And branding with the awful stain
Her friends, and all her dearest kin.

XII.

Yet still she knew his conscience clear,—
That he believed his voice was God's;
And listened with a voiceless fear
To the portentous periods
In which he preached the chosen year

Of expiation and release,
And prophesied that Slavery's power,
Grown great apace with crime's increase,
Before the front of Right should cower,
And bid God's people go in peace!

The fierce invectives of his tongue
Frayed every day her wounds afresh,
And with new pain her bosom wrung,
For they envenomed kindred flesh,
To which in sympathy she clung.

Yet not a finger did she lift
To hold him from his fateful task,
Though Satan oft essayed to sift
Her soul as wheat, and bade her ask
Somewhat from conscience as a gift.

And when a serpent in his slime
Crept to her ear with phrase polite,
Prating of duty to her time
And to her people, swift and white
She turned and cursed him for his crime!

She would have naught of all the brood
Of temporizing, driveling shows
Of men who Philip's words withstood:
Against them all her love uprose,
And all her pride of womanhood.

XIII.

She loved her kindred none the less,
She loved her husband still the more,
For well she knew that with distress
He saw the heavy cross she bore
With steadfast faith and tenderness.

She kept her love intact, because
She would not be a partisan;
Not hers the voice that made the laws,
Nor hers prerogative to ban,
Or bolster them with her applause.

No strife of jarring policies,
No conflict of embittered states,
No chart, defining by degrees
Of latitude her country's hates,
Could change her friends to enemies.

The motives ranged on either hand,
Behind the war of word and will,
Were such as she could understand
And, with respect to all, fulfil
Love's broad and beautiful command.

So, with all questions hushed to sleep,
And all opinions put aside,
She gave her loved ones to the keep
Of God, whatever should betide,
To bear her joy or bid her weep!

XIV.

Though Philip knew he wounded her,
His faith to God and faith to man
Bade him go forward, and incur
Such cost as, since the world began,
Has burdened Freedom's harbinger.

No heart or hand was his to flinch
From ease or reputation lost;
Nor waste of gold, nor hunger-pinch,
Nor e'en his home's black holocaust,
Could stay his arm, though inch by inch,

The maddened hosts of scorn and scath
Should crowd him backward to defeat.
He would but strive with sterner wrath,
And bless the hand that, soft and sweet,
Withheld its hinderance from his path!

XV.

Still darker loomed the Southern cloud,
While o'er its black and billowed face
In furrowed fire the lightning ploughed,
And ramping from its hiding-place
Roared the wild thunder, fierce and loud!

And still men chattered of their trade,
And strove to banish their alarms;
And some were puzzled, some afraid,
And some held up their feeble arms
In indignation while they prayed!

And others weakly talked of schism
As boon of God in place of war,
And bared their foreheads for its chrism!
While direr than the mace of Thor,
In mid-air hung the cataclysm

Which waited but some chance, or act,
To shiver the electric spell,
And pour in one fierce cataract
A rain of blood and fire of hell
On Freedom's temple spoiled and sacked.

The politician plied his craft;
The demagogue still schemed and lied;
The patriot wept, the traitor laughed;
The coward to his covert hied,
And statesmen went distract or daft.

Contention raged in Senate halls;
Confusion reigned in field and town;
High conclaves flattened into brawls,
And till and hammer, smock and gown,
Nor duty knew nor heard its calls!

XVI.

At last, incontinent of fire,
The cloud of menace belched its brand;
And every state and every shire
And town and hamlet in the land,
Shook with the smiting of its ire!

Men looked each other in the eyes,
And beat their burning breasts and cursed!
At last the silliest were wise;
And swift to flash and thunder-burst
Fashioned in anger their replies.

The smoke of Sumter filled the air.
Men breathed it in in one long breath;
And straight upspringing everywhere,
Life burgeoned on the mounds of death,
And bloomed in valleys of despair.

The fire of Sumter, fierce and hot,
Welded their purpose into one;
And discord hushed, and strife forgot,
They swore that what had thus begun
With sacrilegious cannon-shot,

Should find in analogue of flame
Such answer of the nation's host,
That the old flag, washed clean from shame
In blood, should wave from coast to coast,
Over one realm in heart and name!

Pale doubters, scourged by countless whips,
Fled to their refuge, or obeyed
The motives and the masterships
That time and circumstance betrayed
Through Patriotism's apocalypse,

And, sympathetic with the spasm
Of loyal life that thrilled the clime,
Lost in the swift enthusiasm
The loose intention of their crime,
And leaped in swarms the awful chasm

That held them parted from the mass.
The North was one in heart and thought;
And that which could not come to pass
Through loyal eloquence, was wrought
By one hot word from lips of brass!

XVII.

The cry sprang upward and sped on:
"To arms! for freedom and the flag!"
And swift, from Maine to Oregon,
O'er glebe and lake and mountain-crag,
Hurtled the fierce Euroclydon.

Men dropped their mallets on the bench,
Forsook their ploughs on hill and plain,
And tore themselves, with piteous wrench
Of heart and hope, from love and gain,
And trooped in throngs to tent and trench.

"To arms!" and Philip heard the cry.
Not his the valor cheap and small
To bluster with brave phase, and fly
When trumpet-blare and rifle-ball
Proclaimed the time for words gone by!

Men knew their chieftain. He had borne
Their insolence through struggling years,
And they—the dastards, the forsworn—
Who had ransacked the hemispheres
For instruments to wreak their scorn

On him and all of kindred speech,
Gathered around him with his friends,
And with stern plaudits heard him preach
A gospel whose stupendous ends
Their martyred blood could only reach.

They gave him honor far and wide,
As one who backed his word by deed;
And he whose task had been to guide,
Was chosen by acclaim to lead
The men who gathered at his side.

The crook was banished for the glave;
The churchman's black for soldier-blue;
The man of peace became a brave;
And, in the dawn of conflict, drew
His sword his country's life to save.

XIX.

They came from mead and mountain-top;
They came from factory and forge;
And one by one, from farm and shop—
Still gravel to the Northman's gorge—
Followed the servile Ethiop.

Gaunt, grimy men, whose ways had been
Among the shadows and the slums,
With pedagogue and paladin,
Rushed, at the rolling of the drums,
To Philip, and were mustered in!

The beat of drum and scream of fife,
Commingling with the thundering tramp
Of trooping throngs, so changed the life
Of the calm village that the camp,
And what it prophesied of strife,

And hap of loss and hap of gain,
Became of every tongue the theme;
Till burning heart and throbbing brain
Could waking think, and sleeping dream,
Of naught but battles and the slain.

XX.

With eager eyes and helpful hands
The women met in solemn crowds,
And shred the linen into bands
That had been better saved for shrouds,
Or want's imperious demands.

And with them all sad Mildred walked,
The bearer of a heavy cross;
For at her side the phantom stalked—
Nor left her for an hour—of loss
Which by no fortune might be balked.

For one or all she loved must fall;
One cause must perish in defeat;
Success of either would appall,
And victory, however sweet
To others, would to her be gall.

To each, with equal heart allied,
Her love was like the love of God,
That wraps the country in its tide,
And o'er its hosts, benign and broad,
Broods with its pity and its pride!

A thousand chances of the feud
She wove and raveled one by one,—
Of hands in kindred blood imbrued,—
Of father, face to face with son,
And friends turned foemen fierce and rude.

And in her dreams two forms were met,
Of friends as leal as ever breathed—
Her husband and her brother—wet
With priceless blood from swords ensheathed
In hearts that loved each other yet!

But itching ears her language scanned,
And jealous eyes were on her steps;
And fancies into rumors fanned
By loyal shrews and demireps
Proclaimed her traitress to the land.

They knew her blood, but could not know
That mighty passion of her heart
Which, reaching widely in its woe,
Grasped all she loved on either part,
And could not, would not let it go!

XXI.

The time of gathering came and went—
Of noisy zeal and hasty drill—
And everywhere, in field and tent,—
A constant presence,—Philip's will
Moulded the callow regiment.

And then there fell a gala day,
When all the mighty, motley swarm
Appeared in beautiful display
Of burnished arms and uniform,
And gloried in their brave array!—

And, later still, the hour of dread
To all the simple country round,
When forth, with Philip at their head,
They marched from the familiar ground,
And drained its life, and left it dead;—

Dead but for those who pined with grief;
Dead but for fears that could not die;
Dead as the world when flower and leaf
Are still beneath a gathering sky,
And ocean sleeps on reach and reef.

The weary waiting time had come,
When only apprehension waked;
And lonely wives sat chill and dumb
Among their broods, with hearts that ached
And echoed the retreating drum.

Teachers forgot to preach their creeds,
And trade forsook its merchandise;
The fallow fields grew rank with weeds,
And none had interest or eyes
For aught but war's ensanguined deeds.

As one who lingered by a bier
Where all she loved lay dead and cold,
Sad Mildred sat without a tear,
Living again the days of old,
Or, with the vision of a seer.

Forecasting the disastrous end.
Whate'er might come, she did not dare
Believe that fortune would defend
The noble life she could not spare,
And save her lover and her friend.

Her blooming girls and stalwart boys
Could never comprehend the woe
Which dropped its measure of their joys,
And felt but horror in the show,
And heard but murder in the noise,

And dreamed of death when stillness fell
Behind the gay and shouting corps.
They saw her haunted by the spell
Of a great sorrow, and forebore
To question what they could not quell.

Small time she gave to vain regret;
Brief space to thought of that adieu
Which crushed her breast, when last they met,
And in love's baptism bathed anew
Cheeks, lips, and eyes, and left them wet!

In deeds of sympathy and grace,
She moved among the homes forlorn,
Alike to beautiful and base
And to the stricken and the shorn,
The guardian angel of the place.

XXII.

Oh piteous waste of hopes and fears!
Oh cruel stretch of long delay!
Oh homes bereft! Oh useless tears!
Oh war! that ravened on its prey
Through pain's immeasurable years!

The town was mourning for its dead;
The streets were black with widowhood;
While orphaned children begged for bread,
And Rachel, for the brave and good,
Mourned, and would not be comforted.

The regiment that, straight and crisp,
Shone like a wheat-field in the sun,
Its swift voice deafened to a lisp,
Fell, ere the war was well begun,
And waned and withered to a wisp.

And Philip, grown to higher rank,
Crowned with the bays of splendid deeds,
Of the full cup of glory drank,
And lived, though all his reeking steeds
In the red front of conflict sank.

The star of conquest waxed or waned,
Yet still the call came back for men;
Still the lamenting town was drained,
And still again, and still again,
Till only impotence remained!

XXIII.

There came at length an eve of gloom—
Dread Gettysburg's eventful eve—
When all the gathering clouds of doom
Hung low, the breathless air to cleave
With scream of shell and cannon-boom!

Man knew too well, and woman felt,
That when the next wild morn should rise,
A blow of battle would be dealt
Before whose fire ten thousand eyes—
As in a furnace flame—would melt.

And on this eve—her flock asleep—
Knelt Mildred at her lonely bed.
She could not pray, she did not weep,
But only moaned, and, moaning, said:
"Oh God! he sows what I must reap!

"He will not live: he must not die!
But oh, my poor, prophetic heart!
It warns me that there lingers nigh
The hour when love and I must part!"
And then she startled with a cry,

For, from beneath her lattice, came
A low and once repeated call!
She knew the voice that spoke her name,
And swiftly through the midnight hall
She fluttered noiseless as a flame,

And on its unresisting hinge
Threw wide her hospitable door,
To one whose spirit did not cringe
Though he was weak, and knew he bore
No right her freedom to infringe.

She wildly clasped his neck of bronze;
She rained her kisses on his face,
Grown tawny with a thousand suns,
And holding him in her embrace,
She led him to her little ones,

Who, reckless of his coming, slept.
Then down the stair with silent feet
And through the shadowy hall she swept,
And saw, between her and the street,
A form that into darkness crept.

She closed the door with speechless dread;
She fixed the bolt with trembling hand;
Then led the rebel to his bed,
Whom love and safety had unmanned,
And left him less alive than dead.

Through nights and days of fear and grief,
She kept her faithful watch and ward,
But love and rest brought no relief;
And all he begged for of his Lord
Was death, with passion faint and brief.

XXIV.

Around the house were prying eyes,
And gossips hiding under trees;
And Mildred heard the steps of spies
At midnight, when, upon her knees,
She sought the comfort of the skies.

Strange voices rose upon the night;
Strange errands entered at the gate;
Her hours were months of pale affright;
But still her prisoner of state
Was shielded from their eager sight.

They did not dare to force the lock
Of one whose deeds had been divine,
Or carry to her heart the shock
Of violence, although condign
Toward one who dared the laws to mock.

But there were hirelings in pursuit,
Who thirsted for his golden price;
And, swift allied with pimp and brute,
And quick to purchase and entice,
They found the tree that held their fruit.

XXV.

The day of Gettysburg had set;
The smoke had drifted from the scene,
And burnished sword and bayonet
Lay rusting where, but yestere'en,
They dropped with life-blood red and wet!

The swift invader had retraced
His march, and left his fallen braves,
Covered at night in voiceless haste,
To sleep in memorable graves,
But knew that all his loss was waste.

The nation's legions, stretching wide,
Too sore to chase, too weak to cheer,
Gave sepulture to those who died,
And saw their foemen disappear
Without the loss of power or pride.

And then, swift-sweeping like a gale,
Through all the land, from end to end,
Grief poured its wild, untempered wail,
And father, mother, wife, and friend
Forgot their country in their bale.

And Philip, with his fatal wound,
Was borne beyond the battle's blaze,
Across the torn and quaking ground,—
His ear too dull to heed the praise,
That spoke him hero, robed and crowned.

They bent above his blackened face,
And questioned of his last desire;
And with his old, familiar grace,
And smiling mouth, and eye of fire,
He answered them: "My wife's embrace!"

They wiped his forehead of its stain,
They bore him tenderly away,
Through teeming mart and wide champaign,
Till on a twilight, cool and gray,
And wet with weeping of the rain,

They gave him to a silent crowd
That waited at the river's marge,
Of men with age and sorrow bowed,
Who raised and bore their precious charge,
Through groups that watched and wailed aloud.

XXVI.

The hounds of power were at her gate;
And at their heels, a yelping pack
Of graceless mongrels stood in wait,
To mark the issue of attack,
With lips that slavered with their hate.

With window raised and portal barred,
The mistress scanned the darkening space,
And with a visage hot and hard—
At bay before the cruel chase—
She held them in her fierce regard.

"What would ye—spies and hirelings—what?"
She asked with accent, stern and brave;
"Why come ye to this sacred spot,
Led by the counsel of a knave,
And flanked by slanderer and sot?

"You have my husband: has he earned
No meed of courtesy for me?
Is this the recompense returned,
That she he loved the best should be
Suspected, persecuted, spurned?

"My home is wrecked: what would ye more?
My life is ruined—what new boon?
My children's hearts are sad and sore
With weeping for the wounds that soon
Will plead for healing at my door!

"I hold your prisoner—stand assured:
Safe from his foes: aye, safe from you!—
Safe in a sister's love immured,
And by a warden kept as true
As e'er the test of faith endured.

"Why, men, he was my brother born!
My hero, all my youthful years!
My counsellor, to guide and warn!
My shield alike from foes and fears!
And when he came to me, forlorn,

"What could I do but hail him guest,
And bind his cruel wounds with balm,
And give him on his sister's breast
That which he asked, the humble alm
Of a safe pillow where to rest?

"Come, then, and dare the wrath of fate!
Come, if you must, or if you will!
But know that I am desperate;
And shafts that wound, and wounds that kill
Your deed of dastardy await!"

A murmur swept through all the mob;
The base informer slunk afar;
And lusty cheer and stifled sob
Rose to her at the window-bar,
While those whose hands were come to rob

Her dwelling of its treasure, cursed;
For round their heads the menace flew
That he who dared adventure first,
Or first an arm of murder drew,
Should taste of vengeance at its worst.

XXVII.

A heavy tramp, a murmuring sound,
Low mingling with the murmuring rain,—
Heard in the wind and in the ground,—
Came up the street—a tide of pain,
In which the angry din was drowned.

The leaders of the tumult fled;
The door flew open with a crash;
And down the street wild Mildred sped,
Piercing the darkness like a flash,
And walked beside her husband's bed.

Slowly the solemn train advanced;
The crowd fell back with parted ranks;
And like a giant, half entranced,
Sailing between strange, spectral banks,
From side to side the soldier glanced.

The sobbing rain, the evening dim,
The dusky forms that pushed and peered,
The swaying couch, the aching limb,
The lights and shadows, sharp and weird,
Were but a troubled dream to him.

He knew his love—all else unknown,
Or seen through reason's sad eclipse—
And with her hand within his own,
Or fondly pressed upon his lips,
He clung to it, as if alone

It had the power to stay his feet
Still longer on the verge of life;
And thus they vanished from the street—
The shepherd-warrior and his wife—
Within the manse's closed retreat.

XXVIII.

Embraced by home, his soul grew light;
And though he moaned: "My head! my head!"
His life turned back its outward flight,
Like his, who, from the prophet's bed,
Startled the wondering Shunammite.

He greeted all with tender speech;
He told his children he should die;
He gave his fond farewell to each,
With messages, and fond good-by
To all he loved beyond his reach.

And then he spoke her brother's name:
"Tell him," he said, "that, in my death,
I cherished his untarnished fame,
And, to my life's expiring breath,
Held his brave spirit free from blame.

"We strove alike for truth's behoof,
With honest faith and love sincere,—
For God and country, right and roof,
And issues that do not appear,
But wait with Heaven the awful proof."

A tottering figure reached the door;
The brother fell upon the bed,
And, in each other's arms once more,
With breast to breast, and head to head,—
Twin barks, they drifted from the shore;

And backward on the sobbing air
Came the same words from warring lips:
"God save my country!" and the prayer
Still wailing from the drifting ships,
Returned in measures of despair;

Till far, at the horizon's verge,
They passed beyond the tearful eyes
That could not know if in the surge
They sank at last, or in the skies
Forgot the burden of their dirge!

XXIX.

In Northern blue and Southern brown,
Twin coffins and a single grave,
They laid the weary warriors down;
And hands that strove to slay and save
Had equal rest and like renown.

For in the graveyard's hallowed close
A woman's love made neutral soil,
Where it might lay the forms of those
Who, resting from their fateful broil,
Had ceased forever to be foes.

To her and those who clung to her—
From manly eldest down to least—
The obsequies, the sepulchre,
The chanting choir, the weeping priest,
And all the throng and all the stir

Of sympathetic country-folk,
And all the signs of death and dole,
Were but a dream that beat and broke
In chilling waves on heart and soul,
Till in the silence they awoke.

She was a widow, and she wept;
She was a mother, and she smiled;
Her faith with those she loved was kept,
Though still the war-cry, fierce and wild,
Around the harried country swept.

No more with this had she to do;
God and her little ones were left;
And unto these, serene and true,
She gave the life so soon bereft
Of its first gifts, and rose anew

At duty's call to make amends
For all her loss of loves and lands;
And found, to speed her noble ends,
The succor of uplifting hands,
And solace of a thousand friends.

And o'er her precious graves she built
A stone whereon the yellow boss
Of sword on sword with naked hilt
Lay as the symbol of her cross,
In mournful meaning, carved and gilt.

And underneath were graved the lines:—

"THEY DID THE DUTY THAT THEY SAW;
BOTH WROUGHT AT GOD'S SUPREME DESIGNS,
AND, UNDER LOVE'S ETERNAL LAW,
EACH LIFE WITH EQUAL BEAUTY SHINES."

XXX.

Peace, with its large and lilied calms,
Like moonlight sleeps on land and lake,
[illegible] healing in its dewy balms,
For p[illegible] that pines and hearts that ache,
From Hu[illegible] to the land of palms!

From rock-bo[illegible] Massachusetts Bay
To San Francis[illegible] Golden Gate;
From where Itasca[illegible]aters play,
To those which plung[illegible] palpitate
A thousand happy lea[illegible]s away,

And drink, among her dunes and bars,
The Mississippi's boiling tide,
Still floating from a million spars,
The nation's ensign, undefied,
Blazons its galaxy of stars.

No more to party strife the slave,
And freed from Hate's infernal spells,
Love pays her tribute to the brave,
And snows her holy immortelles
O'er friend and foe, where'er his grave.

On every Decoration Day
The white-haired Mildred finds her mounds
Decked with the garnered bloom of May—
Flowers planted first within her wounds,
And fed by love as white as they.

And Philip's first-born, strong and sage,
Through Heaven's design or happy chance
Finds the old church his heritage,
And still, The Mistress of the Manse,
Sits Mildred, in her silver age!